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ABSTRACT

This discussion begins with a brief description of three approaches to teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect (S.S.S.D.), called the "eradication" approach, the "second dialect" approach, and the "both dialects" approach, which is favored here. Because the teacher of standard Spanish as a second dialect is concerned with developing in the student the ability to switch from the local form to standard Spanish, and not from local to English, S.S.S.D. tests should be bidialectical in nature. Therefore, they will be substantially different from ordinary tests of Spanish as a foreign language. The paper offers examples of numerous discrete item formats for S.S.S.D. testing of various linguistic problems. Subsections are included for stress, vocabulary, spelling, reading, dictation, morphology, and syntax. The rationale for each item is described, and some hints are given for the writing of nonoffensive directions. (Author/KM)

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"Testing Standard Spanish as a Second Dialect"

An article

by

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"Testing Standard Spanish as a Second Dialect"

Before choosing appropriate testing procedures for assessing the learning of standard Spanish as a second dialect, we must first consider different attitudes towards its teaching, since these will in turn influence the type of testing instruments used.

There are three different approaches which one can take to teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect (hereafter referred to as S.S.S.D.) The first is what one might call the "eradication" approach, in which the teacher tells the students that his native dialect is wrong, vulgar, or degenerate, and that he must forget it and learn to speak correctly. Next, we have the teacher who would simply like the student to learn standard Spanish, for reading, writing and traveling, but who accepts that the fluent non-standard Spanish speaking student has a tool which is perfectly adequate in its own milieu. We can say that this teacher is using a wholly "second dialect" approach. There is a third approach which, although little used or discussed today, is more suited to the needs of the Mexican American student and I choose to call it the "both dialects" approach. With the latter, the teacher will direct his efforts toward continously reinforcing the home dialect of the fluent student, trying to improve the fluency and versatility of the semifluent student in his native dialect, and at the same time, trying to teach him to switch into standard Spanish when

the situation calls for it, which he recognizes will not comprise a very large portion of the time. It is through this third approach, and not the second as many leaders in the field erroneously believe, that the teacher is on safe ground, in that he will not be open to the charge that he is degrading the student's native dialect by teaching only the standard one. "Judge them not by what they say, but by what they do."

As one applies these different approaches to the area of testing, a salient factor stands out. Test items will not be based on translation and cues in English, but rather on the non-standard Spanish spoken by the student. To illustrate a point, the eradicator will have the student choose between the correct and incorrect form, (witness numerous drills and test items in Baker's Español para los hispanos[1]), the "second dialect" teacher will have the student change language from non-standard to standard, and the "both dialects" teacher may have the student respond using each form to make sure that he indeed knows both. While in the past teachers have used wholly English-Spanish tests, these people were teaching standard Spanish as if it were a foreign language. Eradicators do not fall into this class which I call "traditionalists" since they are not teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

In S.S.S.D. as in Spanish as a foreign language, it is helpful when the teacher knows the native language of the student.* In this way he can anticipate learning problems, and drill and test

*It is even possible to teach both dialects when one doesn't know the non-standard one, by using standard Spanish as a point of departure for comparison and discussion. The more fluent students can provide non-standard equivalents. The teacher who does this will soon become bidialectical himself.

for them. If the teacher does not speak Southwestern U.S. Spanish, he may overcome this need by consulting one of the many articles, theses, and monographs which are beginning to appear on the dialect with encouraging frequency.[2] It will also become obvious as the reader continues through this paper that the S.S.S.D. teaching profession needs its own contrastive structures series similar to the one for foreign languages published by the University of Chicago Press during the mid and late 1960's.[3] This series has served as a basic resource for teachers and textbook authors in designing quality classroom drill and tests.

Since the teaching of S.S.S.D. is still in its early stages of development, a paucity of classroom materials and techniques exists. Therefore, in this article I shall not belabor the subjects of measurement theory, reliability and validity, grading and scoring, but rather will attempt to enumerate some of the different types of test formats which can be used by the S.S.S.D. teacher.[4] It is not intended that each of these formats should occur on a given test, nor that a single one should comprise an entire test. On the contrary, a variety of item types will generally render a better testing instrument than any single one. The teacher is free to choose and use any of these formats, which I offer here only to illustrate the kinds of language learning problems which must be tested and the uniqueness of these problems to the Chicano student.

Stress. Suprasegmental dialectic differences can be tested in many ways. For example, the S.P. (standard Spanish) speaker says oído while the N.S.P. (non-standard Spanish) speaker says óido. This

presents a fine opportunity to utilize a reading test of pronunciation to see if the non-standard speaker knows how to pronounce the standard form. The grapheme itself gives no clue to the dialectic difference. Therefore we can ask the student to underline or place an accent over the stressed S.P. vowel. The following words (diferencia, teléfono) illustrate further this type of item. Each would be written without an accent and the student would mark the stressed vowel. Since the Colorado speaker says diferencéa and telefón he would be likely to erroneously transfer this stress to S.P., thereby producing diferencía and telefóno.[5]

Vocabulary. Southwestern Spanish demonstrates many types of linguistic evolution, which is even more capable of ocurring in the United States, since we are not influenced by the standardization effect which education and the mass media have on the Spanish speaker living south of the border. An example of this is disimillation, a process by which similar vowels in a word become disimilar. In the Southwest, prople say resurar, not rasurar. One can test knowledge of the difference between the two forms by means of a sound discrimination test of the S.N. (standard vs. non-standard) variety. That is, we say resurar, and if the student writes N, then we know he is aware that this is a dialectic form. On the other hand, if we give him the word montaña and he writes S, then we know that he is aware that the form he uses is the same form used throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Other words which illustrate this technique are lechi/leche, nochi/noche, confisión/confesión and licción/lección.

Diachronic linguistics, i.e. historical linguistics, does not always offer a clear picture of the linguistic changes which have taken place in Southwestern Spanish, thereby leading to differences of opinion among scholars. Nevertheless, we will still have to test for differences for which we have no sound explanation. Again, the sound discrimination test is useful when the dialectic difference is essentially phonemic. The Colorado Chicano says incontrar while the Mexican says encontrar. While the student would no doubt interpret both words equally in a conversation, if he knows the standard form he will be likely to use it when visiting the land of his ancestors.

Radical changing ir verbs such as decir are regular in Chicano Spanish (disir) due to analogy from the regularly conjugated forms. When testing for knowledge of the S.S. infinitive, which is the only real problem with the present tense forms, the student may be more likely to err when going from decir to disir than the inverse. With this type of item format, it is quite possible that the student will not recognize which verb the teacher has in mind, and therefore will leave the item blank, even though he is quite capable of producing his native language form. On the other hand, if disir is given as the cue, the student, recognizing its meaning, may also recall the S.S. form once the meaning assigned to the word when it was learned is established.* Note that this process is inverted with Spanish as a foreign language, where it has long been considered that bilingual

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*This is similar to the reaction of the standard Spanish speaker upong seeing a word like lego, which he does not recognize as meaning luego until someone tells him so.

vocabulary tests are easier when in the direction of Spanish (foreign language) to English (native language). Other words which can be tested in this manner include midir, pidir. and vistir.

Another vocabulary format which students of S.S.S.D. will find interesting and challenging involves metathesis, a common phenomenon in Southwestern Spanish, of which the following are but a few examples:

Write the standard Spanish form by rearranging the letters in the words below.

estuata _____ nierve _____
idomia _____ probe _____
incensio _____ estógamo _____

In testing vocabulary there will be innumerable lexical items which in their non-standard form are derived from English. Again a bidialectic item format is the most advantageous.

Write the standard Spanish form of the words below.

bonche (manojo) _____ pinate (cacahuate) _____
choque (gis) _____ traque (riel) _____
espiche (habla) _____ troque (camión) _____

While some teachers might give the English word and ask the student to translate, this technique can be unduly misleading to the student. Since his native dialect offers merely a cognate of the English word, this is the one which most immediately will come to his mind. In the same way, false cognates like embarasada continue to cause students of Spanish as a foreign language to consistently recall the wrong word. Moreover, when the Chicano is using his language abroad he will need to switch to the standard Spanish terms, not English ones. Since we want to develop the ability to switch from local to standard, not local to English, the bidialectic test item

is more in keeping with our instructional objectives. This is one of the reasons why we have fared so poorly in teaching the Chicano in the past.

Certain typical periphrastic forms which, though admissable, are not normally used in standard Spanish, may also be classified as vocabulary rather than syntactic problems. In this case we may ask the student:

> Rewrite each of the following phrases using a shorter expression.

"el rey y la reina"	los reyes
"mi mamá y mi papá"	mis papás
"mi compadre y mi comadre"	mis compadres
"dar una regañada"	regañar
"echar una mordida"	morder*

Reading. Several people have affirmed that the non-standard Spanish speaker does not need to do the normal kinds of listening and speaking drills performed in a foreign language class. Generally they point out the utility of advancing the student to reading as soon as possible, followed by conversation using new vocabulary, etc. However, reading alone is fine because it teaches the student standard forms and expressions as well as increasing his vocabulary. This can be followed by objective true/false and multiple choice tests over what has been read. The important role of reading ability in taking such tests will further reinforce the instructional techniques and goals of the course.

Spelling. This article will not attempt to treat the many

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*On the other hand, it can be objected that the latter two non-standard forms are even more vivid and expressive than the standard counterparts. Most probably they represent a stylistic problem which could best be corrected at the composition stage. They are included here to illustrate a S.S. assessment technique.

conventions for testing spelling at the early stages of writing skill development. Since the N.S.S. student will attempt to spell his language according to the English graphemic system, he will tend to make the same type error made by anglo students, i.e. spelling aquí as "akee", etc. At this stage the standard teaching and testing procedures for anglo students will apply. Once the student has learned Spanish sound-letter equivalences, special testing formats for the N.S.S. will be needed as the student learns to write in standard Spanish. It is here that he will tend to produce a written version of his non-standard form (writing decir as disir), which of course is not a problem with anglo-american students. The student will not be ready to write compositions in standard Spanish until the teaching and testing procedures suggested below have been covered.

Dictation. When the teacher is training the student to spell in Spanish, a common technique used to determine the effectiveness of instruction is dictation. Often the student of Spanish as a foreign language will simply transcribe the paragraph being read without completely following its meaning. The Mexican-American student, on the other hand, may understand perfectly what the teacher reads , and because of this might synthesize or vocalize it to himself using some of his own dialectic forms. Even though he has learned to assign proper graphemic equivalences to the sounds he has learned, his writing of the words as he pronounces them may give the impression that he hasn't. For this reason it will be best to postpone full dictation for some time, administering spot dictation (the student fills in only one word on the answer sheet after the entire sentence has been

read by the teacher) instead.

Morphology. Of course one of the easiest and quickest ways to test verb forms in context is through a fill-in-the-blank exercise. As a general rule this will suit us also in testing S.S.S.D. There are some other techniques which are also useful and permit us to zero in on error producing elements. For instance, the Colorado Spanish speaker not only regularizes the stress on all forms of the present subjunctive, but converts the morpheme "mos" to "nos" as well. This produces words such as hágano<u>s</u>, píntenos, etc. which can be tested by a multiple choice option. "Mamá quiere que (cantamos, cantemos, cántemos, cántenos) una canción." If the teacher wished to test for knowledge of both the standard and non-standard forms, he could have the student circle two correct answers. Since we have a change in stress between forms, the teacher could also ascertain a great deal by simply asking the student to underline the stressed standard Spanish syllable as illustrated previously in the section on stress.*

Colorado Spanish clearly contains what is sometimes called the historical present tense. "El perro brincó y agárrame la pierna." In this case "agárrame" means "me agarró." It is commonly used to substitute for the preterite even though the preterite exists also. Therefore, an item which calls for the student to change róbanselo to se lo robaron will ordinarily present no problem as the student is merely giving an alternate form of the same tense in his own

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*However, before using this technique it may be necessary to train students to perceive the place where they already applythe spoken atress automatically.

dialect. On the other hand, we can test knowledge of the standard form with the following type of multiple choice item.

Circle the letter of the sentence which means the same as the cue sentence in standard Spanish.

a. Se lo roban.
(b) Se lo robaron.
c. Se lo robasen.

Utilization of the multiple choice format reduces the chances that the student will answer the question correctly by opting for the only other form he knows, without being sure it is correct standard Spanish. Indeed, if uncertain, he will probably choose option "c", since it contains a form which is unknown in his own dialect.

The student may at times outdo himeself by using standard forms in situations where the non-standard variant should apply. For instance, in standard Spanish, the imperfect subjunctive has two variant endings following the thematic vowel: "ra" and "se". Only the first of these forms is used in Southwestern Spanish. The student must learn that unlike other words new to him which he can use with his elders, he cannot employ this one unless he wants his speech to appear affected. Such phenomena lead us to the possibility of designing test options which include three possibilities: a) standard only, b) local only, and c) standard and local. In the case of a verb form like comiese, the student would classify it as a. A word such as la plebe (juventud) would be classified as b, while encarcelar would be classified as c. This gives us three possible objective answers for each item. If one were actually teaching a serious course in dialectology to Chicano students, a fourth category could be added to the format, local non-Southwestern, for other rural dialect

forms not encountered in the American Southwest.

Syntax. Normally, it is best to test syntactic elements by having the student rewrite sentences in his native dialect, rendering them into the standard dialect.

Dudo que viene esta noche.→Dudo que venga esta noche.

As always when testing Chicano students, the instructions should be carefully wordad. Under no circumstances should they read, "Rewrite the following sentences in their correct form," which is the general tendency since such instructions are commonly given to students of Spanish as a foreign language.

The non-standard imperative offers similar possibilities.

Vamos comiendo.

a. Comemos
b. Comamos
c. Cómenos

Another syntactic problem which is best tested by rewriting or restating is the loan translation which occurs quite frequently.

tres meses pasados	hace tres meses
Está frío hoy.	Hace frío hoy.
Hace su deber.	Cumple su deber.
Hice mi mente pa' arriba.	Decidí.
Fui pa' tras a Tejas.	Regresé a Tejas.

In testing Spanish as a foreign language one of the most popular devices used today is the dehydrated sentence, or sentence building as it is sometimes called.

señor /ir/ cine. El señor va al cine.

The disappearance of contiguous similar and disimilar vowels, combined with the elimination of certain unstressed vowels and the reduction of consonant clusters, permits us to transfer this common

technique to testing S.S.S.D.

pa' onde	para donde
le trujerel rifle	le trajera el rifle
están casa	está en casa
siba ir	se iba a ir
va disilo	va a decirle

Relative pronouns can be tested through multiple choice options, but are best handled via sentence combining due to the fact that they are often easy to recognize but difficult to recall. Similarly, fill-in-the-blank exercises of this type are often quite vague and permit more than one correct answer.

Allí está el señor. Vendí el libro a él.
Allí está el señor a quien vandí el libro.

The local form of the above is "Allí está el señor que vendí el libro." Items of this type show whether the student has learned to use "quien" as a relative in place of que, in addition to approximating what many believe to be the actual encoding process. The same format will also be useful in testing possessive relatives (cuyo, cuya, etc.) which are unknown to the local dialect speakers. ("Tengo un amigo que su papá es maestro.")

On the other hand, the one word completion format is best for testing relatives which include a proposition normally deleted in N.S.S.

el rancho _____ que vive mi compadre.
la plazita_____ que nació mi mamá.

If, in fact, it is truly our desire that students be bidialectic, then items such as the following are not only justifiable, but are to be expected.

Fill in the correct standard and local Spanish prepositions.

			Standard	Local
Todo depende	_____ (S.S.)	_____ (local) mi hermano.	de	en
Estoy pensando	_____	_____ mi hermana Alicia.	en	de
Juan quedó	_____	_____ venir a las seis.	en	a

Of course one would not need to give credit for the N.S.S. form -- if already known by everyone in the class. On the other hand, giving credit to the third of the class that knows them before the course begins, recognizes the knowledge students bring with them to the classroom, which is another bone of contention with many Mexican-Americans.

The teacher of Spanish as a second dialect is entirely justified in concerning himself with the Spanish spoken by Southwestern students. However, it is of critical importance that he accept and allow credit for the Spanish the student brings to class with him, and this, in my opinion, should be reflected even in the way he constructs and grades tests.

NOTES

[1] Pauline Baker. Español para los hispanos. Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1966.

[2] See Gilberto Cerda, Berta Cabaza and Julieta Farias, Vocabulario español de Texas. Austin: University of Texas, 1953; F.M. Kercheville. "A Preliminary Glossary of New Mexican Spanish." University of New Mexico Bulletin, 1934, pp. 1-69; and Nelson Phillips, Jr. "Los Angeles Spanish: A Descriptive Analysis." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968.

[3] See, for example, J. Donald Bowen and Robert Stockwell. The Sounds of English and Spanish. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965, and J. Donald Bowen, Robert Stockwell, and Donald W. Martin. The Grammatical Structures of English and Spanish. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

[4] A thorough discussion of these problems is presented in Robert Lado. Language Testing. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

[5] Most of the N.S.S. examples used in this article are reported in L. Ronald Ross. "La lengua castellana en San Luis, Colorado." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1975.

[6] See Guadalupe Valdes-Fallis. "Teaching Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking: Classroom Strategies." System, Vol. 3, No. 1 54-62, and James H. Ward. "Spanish Teachers and Spanish Speaking Minorities." Hispania, Vol. 55, No. 4, (December, 1972), 893-95.

ABSTRACT

The author begins his discussion by briefly describing three approaches to teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect (S.S.S.D.). These he calls the "eradication" approach, the "second dialect" approach, and the "both dialects" approach, the latter of which he favors.

Because the teacher of standard Spanish as a second dialect is concerned with developing in the student the ability to switch from the local form to standard Spanish, and not from local to English, S.S.S.D. tests should be bidialectical in nature. Therefore, they will be substancially different from ordinary tests of Spanish as a foreign language.

The author offers examples of numerous discrete item formats for S.S.S.D. testing different linguistic problems. Subsections are included for stress, vocabulary, spelling reading, dictation, morphology, and syntax. A description is made of the rationale for each item, and some hints are given for the writing of non-offensive directions.